
John Anthony Carpenter: An Appreciation 1924–2001

JOHN ANTHONY (TONY) CARPENTER, professor emeritus at Rutgers University and former director of the Center of Alcohol Studies, died on February 27, 2001, in Baltimore, Maryland. He was 76, and lived in Tilghman, Maryland. Tony Carpenter was born in Nice, France, where his mother worked for the Red Cross, and he grew up in Oceanside, New York. Educated at Johns Hopkins (B.A., 1950, and M.A., 1951, in experimental psychology) and Brown (Ph.D., 1954), he also completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Yale, studying with noted biometrician Chester Bliss. Over a long and distinguished career, Carpenter contributed significantly to the research design and analysis of the effects of alcohol and other drugs on behavior. He also played an active role in the editorial and business affairs of the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*. He began his academic career at Yale in 1954, joining the Center as the alcohol research field was assuming its present form. In 1962, he moved with the Center to its new home at Rutgers, where he remained until his retirement in 1996.

Carpenter's career was a bridge between the original alcohol research movement and contemporary alcohol and addictions studies. At Yale, he worked with or knew the founders of the modern field—Howard Haggard, E.M. Jellinek, Mark Keller, Vera Efron and Seldon Bacon prominently among them. The original Center personnel, however, had come to Yale with already-established careers. Carpenter was different: He represented a generation of younger researchers who entered the field immediately or soon after graduate school, and then built their professional reputations there. In effect, he helped assure that alcohol studies—and the Center itself—would outlive its founders.

His research efforts spanned his years at Yale and Rutgers. Over his career, he produced some of the first important work on the effects of alcohol on skin conductance, visual reaction time, aggression, and, in a very practical vein, on psychological contributions to the study of drinking and driving. His review (with Armenti, 1972) on alcohol and aggression was especially noteworthy. Carpenter was also lead investigator on the alcohol-meprobamate studies conducted at the Addiction Research Foundation, in Toronto, and reported in *Drug Interactions: The Effects of Alcohol and Meprobamate Applied Singly and Jointly in Human Subjects* (1975). The volume was significant for its



use of statistical models that Mark Keller, who knew the alcohol literature as well as anyone, called among the most “elegant” in the field.

Keller also observed that Carpenter's experimental designs ranked with the best, and regretted that Carpenter had not published more of his work. He had a point: Carpenter never bothered to report some results, however interesting, that he considered incomplete or peripheral to his interest of the moment (and these included the results of several large human-subject studies). These were the studies he was always “going to get back to.” Instances of these unpublished efforts later were associated with other researchers, and thus the full record of Carpenter's research is found in acknowledgments as well as in bibliographies. He never

lost interest in new scholarship, and had yet another article in press when he died.

Tony Carpenter was an active and familiar figure in the research community. In addition to his published research, he was a sought-after speaker, presenting dozens of papers at national and international scientific meetings; and he organized and chaired any number of panels for various alcohol research conferences. He was a regular editorial referee for journals in psychology and alcohol studies, and he served on the editorial board of the *Addiction in America* project (Arno Press, 1978-1982), a major effort to reprint the classic works in the history of alcohol and drug research. His command of the literature was second to none, and he found keeping up with the advances, controversies, and even disputes in the field all matters of real enjoyment. He was, in the best sense of the word, a scholar.

Carpenter was director of the Center from 1975 to 1981. These were years of intensive activity and change in the alcohol studies field. As director, he spoke widely before national and international bodies on alcohol-related policy and similar issues, and he was a respected advocate on behalf of clinical and experimental research. In this regard, he was proud of his testimony before Congress, his service on a White House Blue Ribbon Panel, as well as his role in shaping legislation in support of the National Alcohol Research Centers of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. He was a tireless champion of the Center. It was during his tenure that the institution undertook its most ambitious initiatives in longitudinal research, the documentation of the alcohol literature, and graduate education. In his view, however, support for basic research was the key to the Center's future: It would attract and hold new faculty and students to the field—much as it had done for him at Yale. In the course of these ventures, Carpenter served as principal investigator on major projects supported by NIAAA, NIDA, and the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. No academic administrator took his role with greater seriousness.

In the early 1980s, however, shifting federal priorities had a pronounced impact on the Center of Alcohol Studies. As director, it fell to Carpenter to make a series of difficult administrative decisions as the Center adjusted to new fiscal and programmatic realities. The tasks and the times were trying, and the events touched everyone at the Center. Yet throughout the experience, Carpenter exhibited a characteristic dignity. There *is* such a thing as grace under fire, and Tony possessed it in abundance.

He loved the professorial life, and was a particularly useful member of the Rutgers community. With joint appointments in the Department of Psychology and in the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, he taught widely at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and was instrumental in establishing the interdisciplinary graduate curriculum at the Center of Alcohol Studies. He

sat on over seventy dissertation committees, where his expertise in design and statistics was invaluable, and he never lost interest in his students as they established their own careers. He could not imagine the Center without students.

He felt the same about junior faculty, for whom he proved a demanding but wise mentor. While director and afterward, Carpenter did what he could to foster a scholarly atmosphere at the Center that encouraged not only established researchers, but also those in the early stages of their careers. Indeed, he took a particular interest in the work of younger faculty, and made a point of explaining to the University and the alcohol field that the Center could attract new talent from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. He insisted that younger faculty produce—not a bad thing to impress on assistant professors—and was the first to offer congratulations when they did so. He was genuinely proud of their contributions and successes.

Carpenter was named professor emeritus in 1996, although he never actually retired in any real sense. He continued his long editorial and administrative association with the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, serving as managing editor and vice president of the *Journal's* parent corporation until his death. He also maintained his efforts on behalf of a number of professional and other organizations, including those involved with alcoholism and alcohol studies. He was particularly interested in the affairs of the American Council on Alcoholism, where he served for many years as a member of its board of directors, and which once honored him as its Man of the Year.

If his was a distinguished career, however, we should note that, like many of his generation, Tony had seen a good deal of life before entering academia. In fact, he almost didn't get there. He was a veteran of General Claire Chenault's 14th Air Force, the successor organization to the legendary Flying Tigers. Tony served in B-24 "Liberators," heavy bombers that flew long-range missions against Japanese targets from bases deep in the Chinese interior. In early 1945, 19-year-old Staff Sergeant Carpenter found himself on a mission that went very wrong. Returning from a mission, the bomber's pilot flew for hours through a terrible storm while the flight engineer struggled to keep the engines running and Tony tried to fix a dead radio. When the engines finally quit, the crew bailed out over completely unknown territory, and with the rest of his comrades, Tony was captured by Chinese bandits. Under the circumstances, he may not have considered himself lucky, but he was. Japanese captors often made short work of downed Americans, but bandits did a regular business ransoming stranded flyers back to the 14th Air Force. Thus, after an anxious 19 days on the trail, Tony returned to base to fly again. He had kept his head during the experience—perhaps revealing some of the composure and inner strength that served him so well later in life—and he won the Distinguished Flying Cross. It was a source of pride for the rest of his life.

Much of Tony's appeal was his frank and open manner. He was approachable, willing to give his attention to questions and appeals for help from researchers and others he barely knew. He spent long telephone calls discussing the history of alcohol studies and research techniques with scholars he never met in person. He loved classical jazz, history, and Harry Truman, whose advocacy of the GI Bill allowed Tony to pursue an education and career he was convinced would have been otherwise impossible. He had a sense of humor that never failed, and, thoroughly unpretentious himself, he had little patience with pretentiousness

in others. He kept up with old friends: One could pick up with him easily after a lapse of months, Tony somehow remembering exactly where you had left off. There was no mistaking his enjoyment at meeting again. He was completely honest and decent.

In February 2001, Tony Carpenter was interred with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery. He is survived by his wife, Marilyn; his daughter, Lisa, of St. Louis, Missouri; and his brother, DeWitt Carpenter, of Aldrich, Missouri.

— *Mark Edward Lender*